

THE FINAL NAIL

- Supplement #1 Fall 1996 -

For detailed information on liberating fur farm animals and destroying the fur industry read the original Final Nail (available all over). This is the first supplement to the original Final Nail released early this summer. It is meant to go hand in hand with The Final Nail. If at all possible people should just add these 8 pages after the last page.

In this and each and every supplement we will bring you news of: Fur Farm raids, How To updates, Security updates, New Farms, Farm closures, and corrections from the original Final Nail. The new and revised Final Nail #2 with tons of new farms, phone numbers, corrections should be out by Yule.

Operation Bite Back - Part II

Over the last year the Animal Liberation Front has made 21 fur farm raids in North America and shows no sign of slowing down.

- **October 26/95 - Chilliwack, BC;** 2400 mink released at **Dargatz Mink Ranch**, breeding information also destroyed, \$383,000 losses.
- **November 13/95 - Aldergrove, BC;** 5000 mink released at **Rippin Fur Farm**. In the early morning shortly after security guards had made their regular rounds, someone using bolt cutters cut through fences, opened every cage and destroyed 70 years of breeding information. The mink were due to be killed in a couple weeks by carbon monoxide gassing, \$ 765,000 losses.
- **November 16/95 - Pleasant View, TN;** **Mac Ellis Fox Farm** raided for the second year in a row. Thirty cages were opened before a disturbance forced the A.L.F. to evacuate.
- **November 16/95 - Olympia, WA;** **Clarence Jordan's** mink farm had 300-400 mink released and slogans spray painted "*Mink Liberation*" and "*Release Mink Now*". "...an attempt at burning down his storerooms, refrigeration unit and killing shed was aborted because he came out. ... Clarence has recently secured his cages with extra wire as a response to earlier attacks in British Columbia." *communique*. **Now Closed - VICTORY!**

- **January 15/96 - Sheboygan, WI;** **Zimbal Mink Ranch** has 400 mink released. These were part of a 20,000 strong breeding herd. Breeding records also destroyed.
- **April 4/96 - Victor, NY;** A.L.F. activists struck **L.W. Bennett & Sons' Fur Farm** cutting through double guard fences and releasing over 3000 mink. Damage estimates ran as high as one million dollars. Two years ago someone clipped a section of fence on the farm, but no animals escaped.
- **June ?/96 - WA;** 80 mink liberated from an unknown fur farm. We received word of this with little detail as to the location of the farm.
- **June 7/96 - Sandy, UT;** **Utah Fur Breeders Agriculture Coop** raided and 75 mink used in nutritional research liberated. Two sheds were half full with mink, and one of them was completely emptied out.
- **June 21/96 - Riverton, UT;** 1,000 mink liberated from **Beckstead Mink Farm**. The A.L.F. found dead mink lying in cages, under the cages in piles of feces, with many half eaten by other mink. "*More actions are coming. Murderers beware.*"
- **July 4/96 - Howard Lake, MN;** A.L.F. raiders liberated 1000 mink at **Latzig Mink Ranch**, as part of an Independence Day action.

- **July 4/96 - Pleasant View, TN;** The A.L.F. visited **Mac Ellis Fox Farm** in hopes of raiding it for the 3rd time in as many years. The group discovered that the second raid (Nov. 1995) had put the fur farmer out of business. **Closed - VICTORY!**
- **July 5/96 - Langley BC;** 400 mink were released from **Akagami Mink Ranch**, \$62,000 losses.
- **July 17/96 - South Jordan, UT;** 3000 mink liberated from **Holt Mink Ranch**. \$35,000 in damages just from breeding cards being destroyed.
- **August 9/96 - Hinsdale, MA;** Over 1000 mink were liberated from **Carmel Mink Ranch**. "*Most cages were opened.... and (we) painted A.L.F. on the shed,*" said the *communique*. More than \$10,000 damage to breeding stocks.



The Mac Ellis Fox Farm shortly before it closed. Good Riddance!

- **August 12/96 - Alliance, OH;** 2500 mink liberated from **Justice Journey's** (President of the Ohio Mink Breeders Assoc.) fur farm. Slogans were also spray painted.
- **September 28/96 - Provo, UT;** 8000 mink released from **Paul Westwood's** mink farm, breeding cards destroyed. Huge holes cut in two surrounding fences. "*Many animals were left behind and for that we are sorry, but this war is far from over...*" from the *communique*. Over \$20,000 in damages.
- **October 5/96 - Alliance, OH;** **Justice Journey's** fur farm raided for the second time in less than two months, 8000 of 15,000 mink liberated.
- **October 5/96 - Lyndeborough, NH;** **Richard Gauthier's** fur farm raided, 35 fox and 10 mink liberated. Slogans spraypainted and extensive damage down.
- **October 11/96 - Hinsdale, MA;** **Carmel Mink Ranch** raided for the second time in two months. Activists bypassed an infrared beam alarm system triggered if cages opened, 75 mink liberated.
- **October 23/96 - Lebanon, OR;** **Arnold Kroll's** mink farm raided and 2000 mink liberated. "*As long as there are animal concentration camps there will be an Animal Liberation Front! We'll be back.*"
- **October 24/96 - Coalville, UT;** 2000 mink and 200 fox released from **Devar Vernon's** fur farm. "*This is not the end, this is a war, and we will continue to fight it.*" said the *communique*.

The Fur Farm Industry gasps for air...

The Fur Industry has been in a frantic scramble after they realized the new wave of attacks against the fur industry were not going away. Over 38,000 mink and 265 fox have been released in the last year.

Shortly after the two big raids in Canada and another one in Washington, in November '95 the *Canadian Mink Breeders Assoc.* along with *Fur Commission USA* offered a reward of \$50,000 for information leading to the conviction of A.L.F. activists responsible for fur farm raids in North America. Other sponsors of the reward fund were *North American Fur Auctions*, *American Mink Council*, *Seattle Fur Exchange* and *American Legend Cooperative*.



Video clip from Crime Stoppers TV segment

In late January '96 they decided that 50 g just wasn't enough and offered a \$70,000 reward. And obviously feeling very frustrated again in May the *Fur Commission USA* adds another 30 g to the pot, upping the reward to \$100,000.

Finally the fur auction houses started to think they might lose some of their best customers and big \$\$\$ due to A.L.F. raids before pelting season even came around. In June the *North American Fur Auction* offers blanket insurance to every fur farm that sells their pelts to them. The policy offers a maximum of \$250,000 coverage per ranch for damages due to an A.L.F. raid. With deductible being \$25,000 or 25% whichever is lower per occurrence.

In July *Seattle Fur Exchange* followed suit by offering blanket insurance to all farms that sell to it. Covering losses of up to \$350,000 with the same deductible.

Fur Age Weekly while reporting that the *Final Nail* was distributed at the *World Congress For Animals* has down played it to fur retailers.

In September *Crime Stopper's* in British Columbia featured a segment with a recreation of the Rippin mink farm raid, and offering a \$2000 reward along with the \$100,000 offered by the fur industry. It was playing 4-6 times a day at different times last we heard.

The *Fur Commission USA*, *Canadian Mink Breeders Assoc.* and *Fur Farm Animal Welfare Coalition* have been working overtime trying to try and slow down the wave of anti-fur actions. *Fur Commission USA* has been sending out info packets with information on previous raids, militant animal liberation activists in their area, the Animal Liberation Front and even a copy of the *Final Nail*. Word has it they've sent them out to law enforcement agencies in at least 21 separate states and Canada.

The FBI and RCMP are investigating all fur farms raids. They also regularly help each other out with investigations and share information on radical animals activists active in both countries.

USDA Releases 1995 Statistics

446 mink farms operated in 1995, this is a decline of 3% from the previous year. These farms killed 2,691,700 mink which is an increase of 7% from 1994. The skins were valued at \$143 million which is an increase in value of 72%. This is because of increased demand for furs in the Far East.

The number of mink killed will be about the same in 1996 and 1997. The new found profits the fur farmers are receiving will be used to pay off debts incurred during the last 7 years, and cover the costs of maintenance that has been neglected for years because of a depressed fur market. Unless we turn things around, the body count will definitely grow in 1998.

USA Mink Farms	1994	1995
Utah	130	130
Wisconsin	78	77
Minnesota	53	52
Oregon	27	27
Idaho	23	22
Washington	23	20
Iowa	19	21
Pennsylvania	17	13
Ohio	12	12
Michigan	12	12
New York	12	11
Illinois	10	10
South Dakota	4	4
Other states	37	29

49 mink farms also raised fox. This is an increase of 2 from 1994. Probably another 50-75 people raise fox, but have no mink, so they were missed in the count.

Re-introducing fur animals to the wild

On October 23, 1995 the Animal Liberation Front (A.L.F.) opened the cages on the Dargatz Mink Farm in British Columbia, Canada freeing 2,400 mink into the surrounding countryside. The liberation from Dargatz Mink Farm was the first in what now has become 12 liberation raids by the ALF of fur farms in North America in less than a year. (ed; 21 raids as of Oct. '96) The result has been the release of approximately 11,000 mink, 30 fox, and one coyote from the intensive confinement that would have lead to death for all prisoners. The release of animals from fur farms is nothing new. In the former Soviet Union, Iceland, mainland Scandinavia, Western Europe, Britain and Newfoundland. Animal liberation raids as well as accidental and intentional escapes from fur farms have resulted in mink and some fox being introduced successfully into the natural environment. In Britain, the ecological impact of these releases has been measured, and as liberated mink conveniently fill the ecological niche left by Britain's now extinct native otter population, the negative impact has been minimal. In Iceland's island ecosystem, and in parts of Scandinavia,

mink have been slightly more destructive to the ecological balance. Never has the question of formerly captive minks survivability been questioned by those in the know, only the level of impact these beautifully fierce predators have as they successfully readapt to a wild life.

In North America, its a whole different story. Although there is a Eurasian species, mink are believed to be native to North America with the theory that the Eurasian species originated from North American ancestors who crossed the ice bridge between this continent and Asia. Previous to the "discovery" of the "New World", mink were one of many aquatic animals that flourished in virtually every lake and waterway in North America except the desert regions. The war against the mink nation that continues today, began when the first Europeans invaded their homeland. When the Mayflower first rounded Cape Cod, Massachusetts in 1620, already Jamestown, Virginia was the hub of an extensive fur trade. A price list from 1621 records mink among other animals fetching up to ten shillings apiece on the market to which modern day fur farmers can claim as their

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Final Nail Updates

Researching Fur Farms

After compiling the information on fur farms for the original Final Nail from several different sources some of them quite old, we've found there are numerous corrections. And so in our quest to bring you the most up to date intelligence - we will be publishing the Final Nail 2. We are in the process of updating most of the listings from the original FN. Over 50% have some type of addition or change. New address's, new phone numbers, new owners, etc.

In your research and scouting of any fur farms from the Final Nail you should take into consideration the following:

- Some names , phone numbers and address have typo's from when we typed them in from our badly copied original lists.
- Telephone area codes have changed in a lot of places.
- Some town and city names have changed with urbanization. Check local maps.
- Some of the owners have died or passed on their farms to their younger relatives. You can find the farm sometimes by just checking out everyone with same last name in town, if there is not too many.
- Rural Roads (R.R.) in some places have changed to an actual named street, check out local phone directories.
- In a lot of areas the majority of fur farms will be located in approx. the same area or even on the same road.
- Neighbouring farms are quite often owned by members of the same family.

CODING FOR THE LISTINGS

FR	Fur Research-University and/or Private
FFES	Fur Farm Equipment Supplier
FF	Fur Farm
FF-C	Chinchilla Fur Farm
FF-M	Mink Fur Farm
FF-F	Fox Fur Farm,
FF-L	Lynx Fur Farm
FP/W	Fur Processor and/or Wholesaler
FAH	Fur Auction House
FFFS	Fur Farm Feed Supplier
TS	Trapping Supplier
FFO	Fur Farm Organization
FTO	Fur Trapping Organization

NEW FARMS

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Bach Robert **(FF-F)**
10715-104th St., Hudson's Hope, B.C.
604-783-5791
604-783-9263 Teen Phone
Vice President-B.C. Fox Breeders Assoc.
=====

Morrill Rocky **(FF-F)**
1805-91st Ave., Dawson Creek, B.C. V1G 1B2
604-782-4947
President - B.C. Fox Breeders Assoc.
=====

R. Wristen **(FF-M)**
304 Nicholas Cres., Aldergrove, B.C. V4W 3K9
(604) 856-1098
Husband of Annetee Wristen - Treasurer B.C. Mink Producers Assoc.
=====

CALIFORNIA

Bowen's Chinchilla Ranch **(FF-C)**
6320 Honolulu Ave.
818-353-9690
La Crescenta, CA
=====

L A P Chinchilla Ranch **(FF-C)**
9129 Stoakes Ave., Downey, CA 90240
(310) 923-5613
=====

Ferreira Chinchilla Farm **(FF-C)**
10840 Atwood Rd., Auburn, CA 95603
916-885-9226
=====

Bowen's Chinchilla Ranch **(FF-C)**
6320 Honolulu Ave., La Crescenta, CA 91214
818-353-9690
=====

GEORGIA

Richard Bush Chinchilla Ranch **(FF-C)**
1722 Harbin Rd. SW, Atlanta, GA 30311
404-344-1325
=====

ILLINOIS

Daniel Frey **(FF-M)**
26421 W Molitor Rd, Ingleside, IL 60041-8801
847-546-8406
Mink Breeders Assoc. of Illinois - Board of Directors
=====

Charles Ide Jr. **(FF-M)**
8250 Edgewood Dr., Downers Grove, Illinois 60516-4228
708-985-9324
Director - Mink Breeders Assoc. of Illinois
Janet Ide & Harold Melkus
=====

Jeff Serdar **(FF-M)**
39495 N Mill Creek Rd., Wadsworth, IL 60083-9641
847-336-6760
Mink Breeders Assoc. of Illinois - Board of Directors
=====

Larry Frye **(FF-M)**
2222 Behan Rd, Crystal Lake, IL 60014-2632
815-455-4862
2224 Behan Rd, Crystal Lake, IL 60014-2632
815-459-0823
Mink Breeders Assoc. of Illinois - Board of Directors
=====

Milk Specialties Co. **(FFFS)**
Water & Illinois St., Dundee IL 60118
847-426-3411
847-426-4121Fax
Credit Score: B Good
=====

Major fur feed supplier
=====

Milk Specialties Co. **(FFFS)**
11419 Smith Dr., Huntley IL 60142
847-669-5241
847-669-5110 Fax
Credit Score: C Satisfactory
Major fur feed supplier
=====

Bill Talidis **(FF-M)**
4609 Franklinville Rd, Union , IL 60180-9771
815-923-4193
Mink Breeders Assoc. of Illinois - Board of Directors
=====

Starved Rock Chinchillas **(FF-C)**
Mill, Utica, IL 61373
(815) 667-4728
=====

INDIANA

Hidden Meadow Fur Farm **(FF-F)**
59821-Cr 33, Middlebury, IN 46540
219-825-5930
Rick and Renea Miller
=====

Hunters Run **(FF-F)**
5427 Greenwall Rd., Huntertown, IN 46748
219-637-5703
Robert Mosshammer
=====

Owl Creek Fox Farm **(FF-F)**
83435 1000 West-90, Montpelier, IN 47359
219-375-3845
Verlis Slusher
=====

Lair Fox Ranch **(FF-F)**
5610 Shoaff Rd., Fort Wayne, IN 46818
219-637-8527
Blaine Leffers
=====

MICHIGAN

Fox Haven **(FF-F)**
1806 E Hinchman Rd., Berrien Springs, MI 49103
616-471-5114
Jim and Judy Brown
=====

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PROFILE

SKIP LEA

Chairman - FUR COMMISSION USA



Name: Skip Lea
Address: Alma Center,
WI 54611-9707
Country: USA
Phone: (715) 964-6121
Fur Commission USA;
Phone (612) 222-1080
Fax: (612) 293-0532

Skip Lea another fat
slime-ball. Skip Lea is
chairman of Fur Com-
mission USA. He is
known for accusing

A.L.F. activists of stomping mink to death, and other asinine
claims. Him and his brothers own a large mink farm in Alma
Center, WI. Media reports claim that his farm has security guards
24 hours a day. Either way, he must be dealt with.

GRAND JURY'S

The Fur Industry is starting to feel the heat and ooooooh they're
getting annoyed. They are still a huge industry that has millions of
dollars available to them. They are continuing to put pressure on
politicians and law enforcement agencies to treat animal rights
activists as terrorists.

We should all be ready for the Grand Jury's, if they haven't
already started they will. In states where there has been the most
militant animal liberation activity (we could take our guess as could
you). If subpoenaed to a grand jury, you should call a movement
lawyer immediately or contact the National Lawyers Guild. Tell
movement groups and your friends about the subpoena. **Don't try
and deal with it alone.**

For basic information read *'If an Agent Knocks - Federal
Investigators and Your Rights'*, for more detailed reading try *'Agents of
Repression'* by Ward Churchill.

AFTER PELTING

We have found a fairly big variance in pelting time periods. So as
always scouting out the farm your looking at, as much as possible will
help you in determining the best time to hit it. Watch for extra security
measures around pelting season.

All pelting will be done by December and then usually all the
farms will have is their breeding stock. If the weather and other
conditions are correct then breeding stock can be released.

Also after pelting season is the time when they usually let up
there guard. Also if at all possible pelting/skinning/feed sheds can be
burned to the ground or have extensive damage done to them using
other methods: paint/acid/etc. pelting machines, equipment and
feeding tractors can also be damaged.

MEDIA WORK

Media work in something that some cells don't focus on much and for
good reasons; they do it for the animals, and media work can be
dangerous if you are not very careful.

The FBI and RCMP watch fairly closely the mailing
addresses of radical animal rights groups that regularly receive
communiques. It should be expected that all communiques sent to
animal rights groups/media/etc. will be opened, possibly seized and of
course checked for any forensic evidence; fingerprints,
saliva/hair/fibre traces, etc.

If you are going to send a communique it would be a good idea
to send it to as many places as possible so that way at least one will
get there.

For those of you that are interested in doing some post raid
media work - Remember to be extra careful. If you screw up you could
get caught. Video footage and/or photos of fur farm raids are quite
likely to get extensive media coverage.

PROFILE

CHRIS ENGH

President - CANADIAN MINK BREEDERS ASSOC.



Name: Engh Chris
Address: 30030 Burgess,
Abbotsford, BC V4X 2G6
Country: Canada
Phone: (604) 856-2123
Fax: (604) 857-9667

Chris Engh operates his own large
mink farm at his home in British
Columbia and is President of the
CMBA. Chris helped set up the
original \$50,000 reward fund.

MARSHA KELLY

Executive Director - FurFarm Animal Welfare Coalition



Name: Marsha Kelly
Address: St. Paul, MN
Country: USA
Marsha Kelly: Marsha
Kelly is the head PR
person/spin doctor for
the fur farm industry.
She works for Fur
Commission USA, and
is known for dodging
the fur issue in debate,
and trying to divert
attention to other
animal issues. She

lives in or near St. Paul, MN. Her name pops up in media reports
covering anti fur actions, and she is always spreading lies about
the minks ability to survive when liberated. We'll find you soon
Marsha.

PROFILE

FUR FARM SECURITY UPDATE

Fur Commission USA is planning seminars on farm security with security experts for fur farmers across the country. Fur farm security seminars were held this July in Utah at the annual summer school meeting of fur farmers.

A lot of fur farmers across North America are stepping up their security after all the recent attacks. Security recommendations have included; Caller ID on telephones (A great reason to use a pay phone) and having camera's on hand to take photo's of strange visitors.

Other ranchers are recommending

such measures as electrified fences that not only prevent wild animal entries but also signal fence tampering. Electric fences are pretty expensive and it's not very likely that you will run into them. Watch for any attached wires or insulators on fences.

A lot of farms are using some simple precautions such as putting up extra guard fences and wiring cages shut with heavy wire. Both of these can be bypassed around with some hard work and a few good quality tools. Fences can have holes from 8 inches tall to a couple feet wide cut out of them, or can and have been taken down completely and rolled up.

Some farms are hiring security guards to do checks several times a night, especially

for the months leading up to pelting season. We have heard that some of the largest farms have 24 hour security guards during the pelting season. There's not all that much that can be done for 24hr security guards (usually).

The bigger the farm the more likely (although there is always exceptions to the rule) to have some type of security system and or security guard. Proper scouting of farms should tell you exactly what you have to expect.

Activists should always be extra careful about footprints, extra large socks over top of shoes will make tell tale tracks unnoticable or better yet, buy a pair of cheap canvas shoes and dispose of them away after the raid.

Fur Rancher Summer 1996

Video surveillance system may thwart vandals

Animal rights terrorists are becoming increasingly active in their raids on fur farms in the United States and Canada. and fur farm security is an ever more important concern.

Wireless Technology Inc. of Las Vegas, NV. is a leader in the field of surveillance and security systems and has the type of technology useful to all types of lawing operations.

The company manufactures video systems for security at all kinds of operations such as farms, electric substations, parking lots, etc. The King Valley Ranch in Idaho uses a Wireless Technology system to monitor its stakeholder ward.

The ranch wanted a system to eliminate the 2,000-foot hourly trek required from the farmhouse to a distant farm. They had installed a video system teamed with a JVC color camera and monitor.

Now the ranch personnel can monitor the maternity stalls around the clock via real-time wireless video from the rafters-mounted color camera.

Wireless Technology offers many choices in surveillance systems. One system, called the Pole Cam, consists of a video camera mounted inside a housing and attached to a tall pole such as a yard light. The camera is controlled by a handheld controller that can pan, tilt, and zoom the camera at the touch of a button.

The company says it can customize a surveillance system to meet any specific needs.

For more information, contact Wireless Technology Incorporated, 7340 Smoke Ranch Road, Suite A, Las Vegas, NV 89128-0261, Phone (702) 363-2235, Fax (702) 363-5539.

VIDEO SECURITY SYSTEMS

There are thousands of companies that sell security systems across North America. At least one has been mentioned in Fur Industry publications over the last year (see article to left).

Video security is expensive. The more bells & whistles a system has the more money it is going to cost. Usually only the biggest farms are going to have a video security system.

Video security systems can be bypassed with some work and will power. These days some type of good mask (balaclava etc.) is always needed. A little less suspicious looking is a hooded jacket and mask/bandana/etc. underneath. You never know when you're going to turn a corner and run into a video camera (fur farm or other). Non-recognizable clothing should always be worn on raids. Army fatigue jackets or nondescript pullovers and pants are a good idea. Anything recognizable should be taken off or covered, this includes jewellery, tattoo's, watch's, glasses, etc.

Reconnaissance of possible targets plays an important part in making sure everything goes smooth and that you don't have any surprise's. When scouting out farms watch for video camera's mounted on the corners of buildings and inside. Look for the

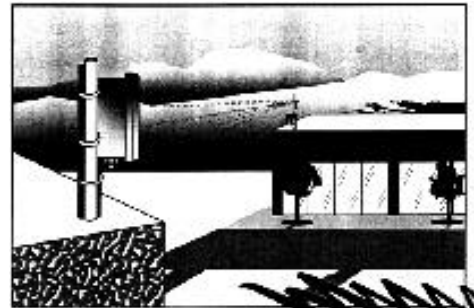
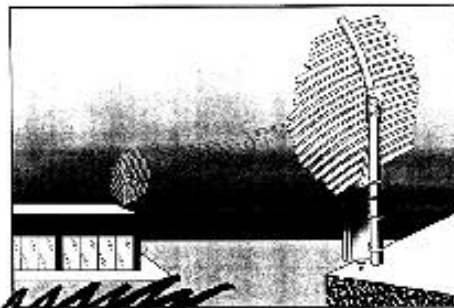
tell tale antenna of a wireless system (antenna's can be as small as 18" x 18"), they may also look more like a box. If you spot camera's and no antenna's, it could be a wired video system with buried cables instead.

Do as thorough scouting job as possible so you know what to expect when you come back to do the job.

If there isn't someone watching a monitor 24 hours a day (not that likely). The camera lense's can be covered up with paint/tape etc., so all their going to record is blackness. Taking them out by damaging or smashing the camera's or antenna's can be done, but be careful.

Some security systems can have alarms (silent or audible) that trigger when a camera is damaged or wires cut. If you know the farmer is away or have already released every animal in the place and are ready to leave the area, you should then damage any expensive video camera's, recorders, antenna's, etc. These systems are not cheap and will cost them tens of thousands of dollars.

All in all if they can't tell who you are on any video footage they might have - then great. Be Careful - If you do get caught on film, they will analyse the hell out of it, and may get little things like your height and mannerism's from studying it.



This is what the typical antenna's for video security system look like.

the fur trade can also accept responsibility for causing the extinction of the native mink salt water cousin, the sea-mink. Nearly twice the size of their freshwater relations, and recorded as inhabiting the whole Northeastern North American Seaboard, all that remains of this being are two skins and a number of bones. That and of course the memory of one furrier who before the American Revolution recalls the pelt of the sea-mink selling for five guineas. And so it is, by the end of the 19th century, freshwater mink were severely depleted from their former range in all of North America by a fur industry thirsty for the blood of this continents fur animals.

Unlike their European and Scandinavian counterparts, mink farmers in the United States and Canada began the attempted domestication and economic exploitation of mink often from live captured wild mink populations. In the 1920's this new element to the fur trade began. In 1925 Kent Vernon's family in Northern Utah (now president of the Utah Fur Breeders Co-Op) live-trapped chicken-killing mink from the wild and began breeding them in captivity. In 1927 the



U.S. Government opened its Experimental Furbearer Research Station in Corvallis, Oregon (shutdown by an A.L.F. raid in 1991) and began experimentation in different techniques to breed wild mink in captivity. With overexploited wild mink populations unable to satisfy the demands of an increasing demand for fur, trappers across North America began to captive-raise wild mink, and in the 1930's discovered fur mutations that altered the minks fur color. Now just 70 short years later, mink farmers are still battling the still dominant wild DNA of captive mink that causes these normally free-roaming solitary animals to contract diseases from close confinement, self-mutilate and even cannibalize their own kind. All for the price of a fur coat.

Beginning in 1990, I researched mink farms by visiting over 25 in Oregon, Washington, Utah, Idaho, Montana, and Michigan. What began as a quest to document conditions and killing techniques on fur farms quickly turned into the study of the first ever attempted domestication of a North American predator. What I learned both by my research and by the rescue rehabilitation, and release of sixty mink from a Montana mink farm leads me to conclude that all captive mink should be released one way or another from their prisons we call fur farms. Highly intelligent, fierce and very adaptive, mink are

anything but successfully domesticated. Arguments by the fur industry that mink are domesticated are ludicrous. Like all wild animals held in captivity, some mink when released from their cages will fare better than others. Many factors contribute to successful mink reintroduction as does the impact they will have on their surrounding eco-system. These are issues I will address in this article.

In 1990-91, I spoke with many mink farmers and researchers who believing I was a mink farmer instructed me in ways to avoid my mink from losing their recessive genetic structure that gave them the fur quality and color variations that separated them from their wild relations. Captive mink are genetically 95% similar to their wild counterparts. The only difference besides behavior being fur color and quality which is solely maintained by a scientifically controlled diet. This is the key to maintaining their genetic difference from wild mink, black and dark mink being the closest genetically to wild mink. Jim Leischow, a second generation mink farmer from Kenosha, Wisconsin in a discussion at the 1991 Seattle Fur Exchange auctions described to me how without a scientifically controlled diet mink on any fur farm would lose their recessive genes, and over powered by their dominant wild genetic structure, return to their wild roots in a few generations. Leischow also detailed how a mink escapee that breeds with a wild mink would produce offspring that in one more generation would have lost all traces of any altered genetic structure. The difference between mink and other animals raised in intensive confinement is totally incomparable as not only are all other domesticated livestock ungulates and herbevorous but also having been domesticated for well over a thousand years. The closest comparison which is hardly applicable but for the sake of argument will be used is the domestication of the common house cat. Originating in ancient Egypt, the cat has had over two thousand years of domestication, yet still this feline predator is proven capable of surviving in the wild as feral populations in the U.S. and Britain will attest to. Once again, survivability is not the issue but impact on their native species. Captive mink are so far away from successful domestication that they rarely are caged together unless with their own off-spring, and then only before they reach sexual maturity. Self-mutilation and cannibalism which is not uncommon on mink farms is yet further proof of a wild animals behavior as it attempts to deal with the neurosis caused by intensive confinement. Anyone who has ever been on a mink farm has heard the incessant scratching mink will make as they attempt to escape or attack their captive neighbours, separated only by a plastic or metal divider. This also is common behavior of a wild predator unfamiliar with close proximity to others of its own species. The psychological as well as physical torture associated with the confinement of mink

naturally accustomed to solitary wandering is beyond our comprehension. Genetically speaking mink are predominantly still wild. Separated only by a controlled diet from their wild ancestors. Physiologically they are identical. What remains as the greatest division between wild and captive mink is predatory instincts and natural behavior that dictates how they hunt, find shelter, build nests, and forage. Fear of other animals is minimal as mink are renowned for their fearlessness. These separations were the basis of personal research into the potential for rehabilitation and release of the 60 mink I had purchased in Montana in 1990. The Coalition Against Fur Farms (CAFF) began as a rehabilitation project, the objective being to determine the feasibility to reintroduce native mink from fur farms back into their natural habitat.

In January of 1991 the trials began as CAFF volunteers placed mink in cages four times as large as their previous enclosures and introduced natural objects such as logs, rocks, plants and gallon baths. Fur farmers had assured me that escaped captive mink already had at least a 50% chance of survival, and CAFF hoped to increase that figure as much as possible. The introduction of 12" x 6" bathtubs allowed the mink their first opportunity to acquaint themselves with water besides that came from a small water nozzle or dish. Their response was to fully submerge themselves and spin in a cycle that quickly splashed all water out of their baths. This would be followed by grooming sessions in which the mink dried themselves and maintained utmost cleanliness, yet another sign of a healthy wild animal. Once the mink had built up muscular strength after their time in a fur farms cramped conditions, we began to nurture hunting instincts. Though morally opposed to the killing of animals CAFF felt the survival of our captive mink could not be guaranteed without a minimal amount of live-animal feeding. We knew that our project would later be used by others to determine the potential for successful reintroduction of fur farm prisoners, and so chose to do everything possible to ensure not only their survival but also their survival without human dependency. This also meant live-feeding which would teach them how to hunt rather than scrounge near or where humans were. This would ensure greater independence and less likelihood of human/mink encounters. Then mink in our rehabilitation project dug into their instinctual memory to remind themselves how to first seize the prey with one bite, then without releasing it, crush down until the skull or neck was broken. Then the mink would release its prey and scour the logs and rocks for others that might have gone unnoticed. Once assured of no other present prey, the mink would return to the kill and eat everything or place the remainder in its nest just like wild mink. Once the mink had learned to kill and had tasted live food, they refused to eat the scientific diet we had been supplied

by National Fur Feeds. Finally, we released the mink to natural waterways across the Northwest's many forest lands. Always far from human habitations. And never within a 5 - mile radius of another captive released mink of the opposite sex. We wanted to ensure the breeding only with wild mink. We also waited until the natural breeding season had passed so as not to burden the mink with the upbringing of offspring in their first season of freedom. Our mink releases were filled with encouraging signs that the mink would survive. On one release a mink quickly found an abandoned animals burrow, and as we left we could see its head peeking out watching our departure. Another release had a young female mink burrowing under a log, gathering twigs and grass building a nest. Still another mink quickly found a mouse hole, and burying its nose in it began to dig frantically. On many releases near streams the mink were quick to explore the shore of the water, eventually plunging in and swimming completely submerged playing with pebbles and rocks with their forepaws. Returning to one release site weeks later I quickly found mink droppings and tracks near the creek and the dropping contained hair from a preyed upon animal. Most of the behavior exhibited by our mink was not learned, but simply returned to them as they found themselves in their natural element.

It is my belief that the liberator becomes responsible for the lives of the liberated when she/he endeavors to free them. Ideally the liberated will become truly independent of human needs and achieve complete liberation. But until then there are a number of factors that liberators can influence and by doing so increase the possibilities of a liberated mink's survival. The priority being the time of year liberations take place. The best time being between May and January, the worst being during the breeding and kit-bearing season. Releasing an impregnated mink increases the needs of the liberated mink for food and shelter, female mink naturally raise their kits alone. Releasing mink once they have given birth to a litter will also mean abandonment of kits which sometimes can be foster-raised by another mink mother. Of course it cannot be over looked that all captive mink are destined for death, and there is room for debate as to what kind of death is most desirable, a mink being the only one to surly know. Still I have hesitated to release mink from fur farms near heavily traveled roads knowing a large number would become roadkills. This is yet another moral dilemma the liberator must face when they decide to open the cages.

Personally, I have seen mink watching as the gas-chambers are wheeled down the rows of cages and seen them screech frantically and attempt all manner of last minute escape as it becomes painfully evident that they will die. There is also the very compelling argument that even with the recapture

of 100% of all released mink from a targeted farm, that still the breeding has been completely disrupted as farmers have no way of separately identifying their breeder mink from their pelted mink. A mink raised to be pelted will often be in a much smaller cage than a breeder mink. For this reason liberators would do best by releasing mink from both large and small mink cages so as to confuse the two. As of yet mink farmers have not devised methods of tagging, branding or tattooing individual animals except for labeling



These specialized tractors for feeding can be found on many larger fur farms, they should be destroyed if possible.

on the cage. For this reason it is always advantageous to remove all record-keeping cards from cages when releasing mink. Transportation of mink either a short distance from cage to guard fence or a larger distance is best achieved by securing the mink individually in its nestbox. A small flat piece of sheet metal is often used to divide and block the hole leading from the nestbox to cage at which point the nestbox can then be removed and the hole blocked with a gloved hand or more permanent means for long transportation. Despite the average liberators aversion to leather, nothing protects human skin better than a thick pair of leather welding gloves which usually can be found lying around a mink farm. With criminal DNA testing liberators should take every precaution not to leave a blood trail of their own. Remember, you are dealing with a wild predator unfamiliar to kind human hands.

Often given the choice, a mink will leave the immediate area once outside of the guard fence, which usually is a 5-6 foot fence lined with sheet metal to prevent escape should a mink get out of its cage. If left inside the guard fence often a mink will linger simply because of the smell of food or other mink cages, and also because of the familiarity of its own nestbox which is all it has ever known. Once a large number of mink have left the guard fence area the quickest method of natural distribution is waterways. Without interference from the irate mink farmers attempting to recapture his furry investments, mink will not overcrowd themselves in the wild. It is not uncommon for a mink to travel 5 miles in one night (they are mostly nocturnal) and a large number of mink released in one area will not stay concentrated but will travel until they establish a territory all their

own, searching out other mink only to breed.

This leads us to the issue of ecological impact caused by mass mink liberations on their new environment. There will be a noticeable impact on local prey populations and for this reason liberators should research target areas to guarantee that the sensitive habitat of a vulnerable endangered species is not nearby. Mink will attack almost anything. I've seen mink chasing large dogs and heard a story of one seen flying through the air attached to the leg of a large heron, the mink unwilling to release its targeted prey.

Mink will kill beyond their need, and for this reason caution should be taken when releasing mink near large concentrations of small animals. Mink are ferocious. Long persecuted at the hands of man native predators are continually routinely killed by ranchers and other gun-toting humans. Much like the coyote has filled the ecological niche the wolf has left behind and by doing so extended its own historic range, so also do mink have the potential to fit nicely into the niche otters and other predators have left as their numbers are continually reduced by humans. Native mink populations are still drastically reduced, and given large-scale mink liberations, individual mink are sure to redistribute themselves to their former habitat with a little help from their two-legged friends.

There should be not hesitation to reintroduce captive mink into their native habitat. The ideal environment being undeveloped areas with a nearby water source and infrequently used roads. As A.L.F. liberators open the cages, they not only liberate an individual animal but the whole species. Mink, fox, bobcat, and lynx farm liberations are not only a blow to a fur farmers profit margin but also a boost to North America's ravaged environment. With an absence of natural predators, prey populations often explode causing undue harm to their environment and are also known to spread disease. By releasing fur farm prisoners, liberators are guardians of healthy eco-systems. Before one single animal abuser can argue the merits of a captive fur animals impact on the natural environment, they must first address the overall impact the whole domestic livestock industry has had on the earth. It is no coincidence that the number one reason behind predator eradication is the protection of politically powerful livestock interests. Still it remains that for the mink nations of North America the shortest path on the road to animal liberation lies from the opened cage to the outlying guard fence.

Now it is time for liberators across the continent to follow the lead of the A.L.F. in British Columbia, Washington, Utah, Wisconsin, Tennessee, New York, and Minnesota and take action to liberate the four-legged prisoners from the war on nature.

Until all fur farm prisoners are free...

Open the cages!!!

- Rod Coronado

Natural Fibers **(FF-F)**
17519 L Drive South, Marshall,
MI 49068-9240
616-781-8045
Joe & Marie Mcfadden
=====

Dale Hiatt **(FF-F)**
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'silver' fox
=====

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PENNSYLVANIA

Guzy's Chinchilla Ranch **(FF-C)**
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19506
610-488-6081
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WISCONSIN

American Fur Farmers Assoc.
(FFO)
Sexton Rd, Elkhart Lake, WI
53020
414-894-7688
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Central Mink Foods Inc. **(FFFS)**
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54451-1740
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Dehart's Mink Farm **(FF-M)**
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hawk, WI 54487-9404
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Ed Brecke Jr. Mink Ranch **(FF-M)**
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WI 54480
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Milk Specialties Co. **(FFFS)**
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414-898-5424 Fax
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Redgranite, WI 54970-9731
414-566-2563
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T & T Mink & Fur **(FF-M)**
N-9563 Sexton, Elkhart Lake, WI
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414-894-7688
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Another mink being prepared for execution



**The A.L.F. is always watching
and THERE'S NOWHERE TO HIDE!**